

The Tree of Life

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Summary: A/U: Raven, Clarke, Lexa and Abby undertake a perilous journey through time and space in a desperate attempt to stop the destruction of the world. They are not alone in their quest. None of them may be who they seem to beâ€"they are being hunted. They have to trust each other, together and separately to search for a way to avert an apocalypse threatening them all.

The Tree of Life

Associated Press

October 20, 2016 CE

Syndicated dispatch

PARIS, (AP) Infinity Core, Ltd. (TSE: 4589, "Infinity Core") announced today, artificial intelligence technology (henceforth, AI) which provides an appropriate mission of applying technology to transform the retail experience customers can now use natural conversation as they shop online via an intuitive, dialog-based recommendation engine powered by Fluid XPS and receive outerwear recommendations tailored to their needs.

"The retail industry, like many others, is flooded in structured and unstructured data - from social media to text messages to customer reviews. By tapping into AI, retailers have the power to turn this data into meaningful insights that can user experience more intuitive, informed and enjoyable," said Rebecca Carlson, Infinity Core, Ltd VP Business Development & Partner Program. "Market leaders understand how cognitive technologies can redefine how brands connect and engage customers."

AI provides appropriate work orders based on demand fluctuation and on-site activity derived from big data accumulated daily in corporate business systems, and its verification in logistics tasks by

improving efficiency by 8%. By integrating the AI into business systems, it may become possible to realize efficient operations in a diverse range of areas through human and AI cooperation.

* * *

><p>October 20, 2050 CE<p>

In the early hours of the morning after an industry party in Malibu, Raven's drives the PCH to the bungalow she's house-sitting, her new friend's midnight black hair and bright red dress makes it hard to concentrate and the hand between her thighs almost off roads them. She clears her head with two offered lines of coke and a stim-patch.

They enter the living room and Raven punches in the security code and flips the dimmers off. The view out of the floor to ceiling windows down to the beach and the pacific is stunning during the day and tonight with a full moon it's light enough to make them both shimmer with chem trails and saint elmo's fire. She slides one door open to let in the warm breeze and turns to her companion.

Raven has no intention of controlling any of this. She can feel the woman drawing closer, a promise and a threat, predatory and unemotional all at once. Raven doesn't care. The 'shroom tea she drank earlier is a little stronger than she expected, and the several cocktails she's had renders her blissful and hot and up for anything. Even if it's just going to be a long night of just looking at each other; _it's all good_.

The woman drapes her arms around Raven's neck and the sweet warmth of her breath caresses Raven's cheek, her smell is subtle, like starlight and a faint hint of silver. Raven tries not to lose herself, the feel of _what's her name_ "Andrea, Alison?" "as she presses closer is welcoming, like a fire that doesn't quite reach her bones. Raven freezes against her, paralyzed and vulnerable. She's especially vulnerable to the unexpected and powerful desires surging through her, racing through her blood and between her legs. Something else must have been in the tea, maybe cough syrup. Coke mixed with 'shrooms is a mellow unhurried disarray of sensation. This will be a primal fuck. Time to change dealers.

Overwhelmed by the need engulfing her, Raven stumbles back against the couch.

"What's your name?"

The woman laughs, "Oh, Raven. I've already told you. Someone's feeling fantastic, yes?"

Raven smiles.

"Alie. My name is Alie." Alie's hands slide across her stomach and under her \$120 dollar Marc Jacobs sweatshirt and forces the breath from her lips. Alie takes off Raven's glasses and runs her hand through her hair. Her fingers splay across her breasts and pull at already hard nipples, palms smoothing the pain away immediately. Raven moans despite herself, she's being forced to vocalize her pleasure and she doesn't mind one bit. She tries to hold on to reality just a little longer and fails; and she's peaking as quickly

as she ever has before"her sensitivity is unbelievable. When she comes moments later, Alie kisses her throat and promises her she won't even have a mind when she's done with her so they should do it until one of them passes out.

When she wakes up in the late, late afternoon the next day"she thinks it's the next day" Alie is gone. The note on the pillow reads:

I know that I hung on a windy tree
nine long nights,
wounded with a spear, dedicated to Odin,
myself to myself,
on that tree of which no man knows
from where its roots run

"A

* * *

><p>The New York Times<p>

Friday, July 11, 2051

A prominent researcher, whose identity has not been released, was shot twice in his rented apartment, execution style.

He has been linked to most cutting edge research on record concerning Artificial Intelligence. His affiliations with scientific groups, particularly privately funded Infinity Core, Ltd. and numerous Universities and Labs around the world, are extensive. Other researchers, scientists and known associates have declined to comment.

In the past few days, those acquainted with him have described him to reporters as pleasant, soft spoken, courteous, well-dressed, foreign and seen in the company of a young dark haired woman who's been identified as an acquaintance. She has been confirmed to be out of the country at the time of the alleged murder. Authorities have indicated there was no charge against her and she was wanted only for questioning.

* * *

><p>Saturday, July 12, 2051<p>

She remembers falling through the storm. The sky howls as she plummets and waves crash over her with unhindered power. White spray caught in the night sky cascades against flashes of lightning. The cold sea envelops her after the sharp searing heat of bullets enter her lower back and graze her forehead.

Cold water envelopes her, swallows her and twists her impossibly"she inhales once, a single breath of air. Heat at her temple sears through the freezing water. The fire of the wound tears

at her consciousness and whites it out. Ice pulses in her stomach and her legs and her chest, warmed by the cold sea around her. There's peace.

After that, nothing.

* * *

><p>Sunday, November 20, 2051<p>

It's only marginally strange for Raven Reyes to be handed all of her things in a plastic sandwich bag filled with the detritus she'd checked in with 28 days earlier. They gave her one hour of Internet access a week after she entered the facility, she refused phone privileges because fuck if she was going to talk to anyone about this, and she has no "after-care" plan to speak of; no extended family she knows of and she doesn't want her manager, publicist or agent as confidantes. She wants nothing to do with any of them.

Her mother is dead so no family sessions, no visitors. She refused to call Bellamy, Octavia, Monty, Jasper and Lincoln; her shame around all this is brutal and overwhelming. And Wick is an asshole; a brilliant one, but he's an asshole for caring too much about her. She won't, and can't deal with that anymore.

She almost gets thrown out the second week for fucking her group therapist as a coping mechanism, angry about being on her own and locked up even though she knows she can walk out whenever she wants; but that's not how they do things here. The therapist gets fired.

The sandwich bag holds evidence of a hectic, itinerant life—"an assortment of fruit roll-ups, her wallet, watch, rings, cigarettes, a necklace Finn made her before she left high school, her identification, Starburst GummiBursts Liquid Filled Gummies Packs, (what?) The last of the xanax, molly and weed she'd had during intake is most decidedly not at the bottom of her bag—"it's all been meticulously cleaned out; they actually shop-vac'd the thing, and put it through eighteen cycles of a carwash, it looks like—"leaving only stray papers with mystery phone numbers scrawled in her loping illegible scientist's handwriting.

There's a severely re-edited script of the highly anticipated indie film she's set to start in three months from now and for once she's happy pre-production is taking longer than usual. Her little black book with the contact for her dealer, dealers, and all the one-night stands and escort services related to her lack of impulse control—"she stares into a topographical map of self-loathing—"she's now officially an ex-junkie, a celebrated mess in recovery; whether it's peak experiences, sustained euphoria or sex; she reaches for everything and gets it.

Fuck knows who drove her here in the first place and she refuses to ask. None of these random, pathetic personal items give her a clue about the ridiculous carnival show of celebrity she's veered off into over the last few years of her life.

What makes Raven extraordinary also makes her isolation complete. She's skipped grades in school, bounced around in foster homes, and made it through damaged, emotionally bankrupt and wiped out. Her luck

stems from the not minor detail of her genius; it gets her noticed. It gets her out of some very shady circumstances time and again. Thank god for Marcus Kane, her Family Court Lawyer; he'd been ruthless in filing the papers for her legal emancipation, and ruthless in making sure she was in the right place at the right time.

Her intelligence is off the charts. Her impulse control is the same. Her fame's been one gigantic fluke. Her agent, Gregory Titus, visiting MIT to see his son for the weekend; attends one of her lecturesâ€”the youngest post-doc fellow at the school's Kavli Institute For Astrophysics & Space Researchâ€”and approaches her immediately afterwards.

Her life before MIT was an ongoing shitshow of welfare, food stamps, government cheese and her mother's drug addiction. Raven's loans were ridiculous, even the salary and stipend afforded her by the Institute couldn't cover the debts her mother had accrued at the time of her death from an overdose.

But then Gregory Titus sits down next to her that one autumn afternoon, forever ago, and gives her the perfect opener: "Soâ€”your money situation? That can be fixed." She doesn't blink at his blatant come on or his inappropriate knowledge of her finances, Wick's sitting right next to her, "We can start you off in a CW show, build a fan base, and then go from there."

"Oh, for God's sake," Raven complains, kicking at Wick's chair under the table, who's just started laughing and flashes an amused, hopeful look at her. "Does it involve sexually ambiguous tweens singing about their feelings?"

"You need the money, babe. What've you got to lose?"

The other miracles in her life are the Griffins. At twelve years old, Marcus places her temporarilyâ€”two yearsâ€”in fosterage with them. Jake and Abby's home on a beautiful sprawling property on Martha's Vineyard is a haven for a traveling sideshow of kids. Monty, Jasper, Finn and Raven. They've all tested off the charts and show tremendous promise despite their circumstances.

Jake's often alone since Doctor Griffin's groundbreaking research has changed their life. He's busy with his work with NASA and Abby is altruistic and ambitious. Her breakthroughs are legendary. She builds a conscious machine. Her contribution posits the need to use lab-grown biological parts. She suggests this casually as a joke once while cooking dinner with Jake and the rest of themâ€”an offhand remark sketching out an artificial intelligence scheme in which consciousness generates as the result of a human brain grown from cellular scratchâ€”stem cellsâ€”and dinner is forgotten and everybody has to make have waffles. They were great waffles, Finn made them.

In the following months Abby vaults from one of the most prominent trauma surgeons in the country to leading a team of researchers at a top-secret level of clearance even Jake doesn't have access to. Her constant travel and absences on one lecture circuit or another, her keynotes at academic conferences, take her all over the worldâ€”and Clarke never forgives her mother.

Raven loves Clarke immediately and Clarke welcomes her in the same way. Clarke is a blonde, strikingly beautiful kid with startling blue eyes; she's sweet, is the gang-leader of whatever adventures they go on, kind and way too serious. The pictures of her visible around the house stop around the time she's eight years old because she gets furious when she sees them. She confides in Wells and Raven about it, but no one else. Abby's constant unavailability doesn't do wonders for Jake either, and he starts to take more time away from home on work trips he never discusses.

Raven remembers Jake, Clarke, and she remembers the ocean. She remembers being struck dumb; in that insane, volcanic hormonal way pre-teens feel everything, by Abby's beauty, warmth and humor. Abby is all compassion and singular focus, smart as hell. She remembers being awestruck the first time she entered the doctor's lab in the stone barn at the back of the property. Abby made them hot chocolate on her Bunsen burner and let Raven read and Clarke sketch while Jasper and Monty putter around the open, fascinating space.

Raven and Clarke read to each other next to the fire pit on cold nights while Abby works or skypes with team members and colleagues all over the world and in different time zones. Raven hardly sleeps and for a kid who has recurring night sweats and hyper-vigilance, the lab becomes her second home, when Abby is at home. When she isn't there the lab is locked and they decamp to Jake's workshop.

It's Jake who realizes Raven's talents and intellect. After that, he pays very close attention to her, in all the ways that he can. It's the first time Raven's felt understood and seen. Monty and Jasper take it in stride. Their parents are dead and they were loved; Raven's felt nothing but fear and revulsion for her mother. Clarke's proud of her, and proud to be her friend.

Abby accomplishes things at a young age and at a high cost to her relationships. She's recognized and lauded by the medical community worldwide. All that means to Clarke is she's angry with both of her parents at a critical time in her life; the kids talk about it and try to help her. The weird and seething truth behind Clarke is that living with two highly secretive, absent and loving parents is confusing and alienating. She can't stand blaming both of them. It's only when she's curled up with Raven deep in one of their secret hideaways that she cries at all about it.

They all fill up most of Raven's heart during critical, tenuous years. Then, her mother overdoses and Raven leaves the Griffin's out of a sense of obligation and hopelessness. She's homeless again, stalked by another of her mom's jackass, meth-head boyfriends; her mother's always running from Nygel, the dealer who held the most sway over her; and she always returns.

When she gets the call from MIT, she almost doesn't get the message. Her mother is so out of her mind the note is illegible and Raven only finds it underneath the small refrigerator after cleaning. She can just make out a number. So that's how it happens. Jake calls in some favors from his boyhood friends Provost Thelonus Jaha and Professor Sinclair, placing her on a fast track out of harm's way and into an academic and research environment that thrills her. She's young for high school and she's younger for MIT. And she knows for sure it was Abby who recommended and sealed her acceptance for early admittance. The four of them, plus Marcus Kane, save her life. And

the food's free.

She'd lost touch with Abby and Jake after leaving. Her mother had taken all her time and drained her. Neither of them had money for a cell-phone nor was it safe for them to have one anyway. She knows Abby and Jake kept tabs on her through Jaha. She knows they're the reason she's alive.

Raven's hears second hand that Jake died during the first semester at MIT and it sets her off; the trigger is so painful, her addictions escalate. She's in the hospital after her first overdose the day of the funeral. She assumes that her absence is on both Abby's and Clarke's category list of unforgivable things. She doesn't blame either of them. It's most of what Raven talked about in group therapy the first week in this facility.

Bellamy, Octavia, and Lincolnâ€"her best friendsâ€"she met in a brief stint in juvie after she stabbed a kid for trying to take the necklace Finn made herâ€"they're all on speed dial or a text away, always, and from the looks of it they've been blowing up her phone for most of the month.

She flies them in and out of a hectic, disassociated life in LA as much as she wants because she can afford it now. She's ashamed and refuses contact with anyone while she transitions out of rehab; all she wants is for her shattered leg to heal. The accident that landed her here in the first place is another wiped memory. She can't recall it. She can't recall much of the last 28 days either, but she supposes that's detoxification _in extremis_.

"You need the money, babe. What've you got to lose?"

She snorts; her entire sense of self and mind? The show's absurd but hilarious and it's shot in British Columbia, one of the more beautiful locations she's ever been to. A post-apocalyptic, sci-fi, horrifically violent and emotionally drastic teen drama, with a lot of pretty peopleâ€"she loves it, doesn't have to think a lot about anything in particular. She hits her marks, says her lines, goes to the entire rounds of meet and greets and the Cons, has a hilariously upbeat presence on social media. One year later, she has a recurring role on a massively popular HBO series. Two years later she's doing films back to back. She's a household name, exhausted, lost and living on kale chips and protein shakes made of something like Miracle Grow; they're keeping her alive at least.

She stands stupidly outside a rehab facility that costs more than most people's houses with a phone she forgot to charge and an obvious thundercloud over her head. The ritual is that everyone gets a song sung to them by the group; but even her bizarre, vastly irritating and fragile partners in crimeâ€"whom she likes very much and misses already because they know more about her than she knows about herselfâ€"avoid her on release day. All but two pay her any attention; Anya and Lexa, Mr. Gregory Titus is their agent as well.

They appear next to her and Anya plucks Raven's Gucci sunglasses off her face and puts them onâ€"she looks great in them, of course. Lexa looks up from her phone to say, "You going to be okay, Genius?"

Raven smiles, "Sure, Superstar."

At this rarified level of facility and its entire concurrent barrage of total blackout, lock-down NDA/Confidentiality in triplicate signed by Godâ€"the services offered all have one thing in commonâ€"they're offered to celebrities at rarely attained levels of recognition. Lexa is A-list and Anya is a musician with two Grammys. Last names aren't needed. They've conveniently disappeared from the public eye on "vacation".

The official story is Anya is somewhere in Kentucky in a secluded cabin reconnecting with family while working on her third album and Lexa is in intense physical conditioning for her next blockbuster while all publicity channels are churning out puff pieces about her former military service and charity work to drum up interest in the franchise.

Raven does not understand what her own PR is; she's sure her not inconsiderable amount of money has been drained to keep this quiet. She's a confirmed bisexual with a string of lovers and a well-known drug problem. However that's been spun in the past has just added to her allure. She also happens to be ridiculously charming and hasn't hurt anybody or pissed anyone off in the industry; she's kind of golden. All three of them are; except Lexa's known to have a temper, hates press tours and would rather do anything else besides her obviously bullshit life. Raven will miss these idiots.

"I put our direct numbers in your cell before it ran out of juice," Lexa says, "and here's an extra charger because you lost yours again."

Raven doesn't know why but that makes her want to burst into tears. "Thanks."

A large black escalade pulls up â€"and Raven sighs inwardly because _really?_â€"and a young beautiful, blond woman in mirrored sunglasses announces she's here for "Raven Reyes" which is weird since she's under an assumed name.

The girl tilts her head at her a little, and then takes off her own sunglasses and justâ€| looks at her, and Raven's blood goes cold. Those blue eyes are unmistakable.

"Raven," Clarke finally says, "Some asshole put me, us, down as next of kin. I'm here to take you home."

"Us?" Raven manages.

"My mother. She's as surprised as I am."

Anya just raises an eyebrow at her and pulls Raven into a long hug; she's keeping the Gucci's, obviously. "Don't get lost, beautiful."

Wide, otherworldly green eyes narrowing to points of aggressive protectivenessâ€"Lexa steps between Clarke and Raven. Raven can't see what's happening but it's not friendly. Clarke visibly shakes off her irritation and extends her hand, which Lexa ignores. "Clarke Griffin." Lexa says. Clarke startles and retracts her hand with a soft laugh, "How do you know that?" Lexa shrugs and her posture

relaxes and Raven, feeling off balance by an unexpected flood of guilt, puts her hand on Lexa's shoulder. The intense silent pissing contest happening between the two women is hard to fathom, but not unexpected knowing both of them. Why it's happening is beyond her. It doesn't really surprise her that Lexa calls Clarke out; she must have mentioned her in some group session. She can't remember. She chalks it up to Lexa being protective. Clarke just looks put out and annoyed as shit.

Lexa, as secretly a cinnamon roll as she is scary, turns back to Anya and Raven and pulls Raven in for an embrace, "Be good." She whispers.

* * *

><p>Once they're in the car, it's beyond awkward.<p>

The stone cold hostile silence lasts until they hit traffic a half an hour later. Raven clears her throat and Clarke, not taking her eyes off the car in front of them says, "Don't say a fucking word."

Bitchiness, Raven can deal with. "Ok, Princess."

"Raven, I mean it."

"It's good to see you too."

That's it for the next 20 minutes as Raven turns on the radio and tries to find a station. Once she finds it she cranks it and sits back with a sigh. She tolerates whatever garbage music she's picked for less than five minutes before viciously turning the thing off again.

"I didn't put you down as next of kin, okay?" she says, "I have no idea what's going on."

"Obviously, because you're a fucking train wreck."

"Nice."

Clarke abruptly swerves the car to the side of the highway and hits the breaks so hard Raven's going to have a bruise from the seatbelt, and she's winded. She stifles a curse and glares at Clarke.

Clarke snorts involuntarily and says, "You're a coward, you jackass. Dad died, and he asked for you. I called you, mom called you. _Everyone called you_, Raven."

Clarke's eyes aren't hidden behind her sunglasses, and something happens to her face, and Raven, for the life of her, wishes to god that she didn't see what she does in those unbelievably expressive eyes. It's all a flash, anyway, but it condemns her for everything and then Raven just very neutrally says, "When did he die."

Clarke slaps her.

Raven takes a deep breath and gets her temper under control, barely. "I'm not a coward, Princess. I'm an addict. I wasn't even thinking about you all," Raven says quietly, "And you fucked my

boyfriend."

Clarke stares at her for so long, a swell of panic bursts in Raven's heart and her skin feels like it's been rubbed raw with sandpaper, and then Clarke puts the escalade back in gear, "You call me that name again and I'll throw you out of the car. And then I'll run you over."

* * *

><p>She wakes in the dark, blinking and disoriented by the dim carrier lights of the cavernous vehicle level of the ferry. She's alone in the passenger sleep curled up in the exact position she fell asleep in. The thrum of the boat's engines is deafening and familiar. Curling herself out of the awkward angle her head's in against the window she stretches and unfurls her body and massages her leg. It's healing, but it aches in damp, cold weather. Rooting around in her duffle she finds an old, comfortable wool sweater and a watchman's cap, dresses quickly and goes to find Clarke. She doubles back to the car and grabs an outer shell jacket.<p>

Clarke, that impossible pain in the ass, is in the last place she looks. She's huddled by herself in the aft of the boat, marginally out of the wind and swirling late autumn snow squall. Raven detours to the concession stand and buys them both a quart of clam chowder each and a hot chocolate and slides on to the bench and places the hot food and drink in Clarke's hands. Clarke takes it without a glance at her and accepts the spoon Raven hands her.

"Put this on," Raven says and holds out the jacket, "You're freezing."

Clarke still doesn't say a word and puts the shell on while Raven holds her food for her in a time worn choreography of handoffs and juggling objects and cups they perfected long ago on walks through the woods and along the coastline of the Island. Clarke takes the chowder back from her and tucks into it, forgetting the hot chocolate. Raven puts hers aside and sips on Clarke's. She moans obscenely despite herself, "Oh my god, this is good."

"What did they feed you in there?" Clarke asks, still avoiding looking at her.

"No caffeine, no sugar, nothing that would trigger a craving."

"Lovely. I would have killed everybody."

"Mm. No sex, no xanax, no 'scripts, no alcohol, noâ€"

"You didn't kill anyone. Did you?"

Raven laughs, "I might have, but everyone signs a NDA."

Raven forgets they're having an awkwardly normal conversation while eating. It's overwhelming how good the food is. She doesn't even notice Clarke watching her with a poorly concealed mixture of hostility and fondness until she's done and is eyeing Clarke's half-finished cup. Clarke hands it over and turns back to watch the ocean. Raven finishes, gathers their debris and lopes over to the

trashcan to get rid of it and then settles herself down next to Clarke again. She stretches her legs out in front of her and drapes her arm across the back of the bench happy to be outside and in the suspended state of nothing the fog creates; it's like a bardo state. They're between worlds. Clarke stiffens when Raven's arm brushes her shoulder but she doesn't pull away and Raven counts that as a small victory.

"Your lifeâ€"youâ€"were important to us, Raven."

"No," Raven agrees softly. "And yes."

She feels Clarke's anger spike again, and she cuts her off before anything can happen, "Listen to me, and listen closely. You have no idea what my life was like. None. Those years with your family were a dreamâ€"a fucking fantastic, safe dreamâ€"but I'm not like you. You couldn't do anything for my mom or me. Not your money, your time, your attention, your love, nothing could help." She pauses and takes a deep breath; "So don't tell me I threw away the future Jake and Abby set up for me or that I abandoned you to loving parents, Clarke, because you're full of shit. Tell me the truth."

Raven looks at her and the nearly homicidal confliction is back on Clarke's face, eclipsing whatever brief peace Raven's banked on in the last hour.

"You never told us, Raven. You left me. You left me. You left my mother. You left Dad. You ghosted."

Raven ignores that, "Why am I here with you now?"

"I have no goddamn idea."

"How's your relationship with Abby these days?"

"Fuck you, Raven."

Raven grabs Clarke by the shoulder, "Abby loves you, Clarke. I've never seen anything like it. I've told you that since we were kids."

Clarke's cheeks flush and her breathing becomes erratic, Raven can see it even in the heightened squall and low visibility they're sitting in, ridiculously, but she's listening and she can hear Clarke above anything else, even this unseasonal weather. "I get it. I get it, Clarke. Abby was running around the entire world and you and Jake missed her. I missed her too."

She stops and struggles when tears threaten, she hasn't cried in years. "I loved Jake, okay? I'm sorry. But your little girl lost crap is so unearned and so indulgent. Get your shit together. Your mom loves you. Mine didn't and almost killed me. Do you blame me for needing to find the same thing you already have, with someone who was incapable and toxic?"

That's all Clarke can take. She wrenches away from Raven and leans over her, she takes Raven's wrists in her hands and cradles them to her chest. Her voice is calm and ruthless, quiet. Raven actually shrinks back from her when she says, "We loved you too, Raven."

Clarke turns, gets up and walks away, leaving Raven to stare uncomprehending at her retreating back.

* * *

><p>You aren't helpless. You will find your way.

So far she has and it's a little frightening. What had her therapist said? He'd told her the skills and talents would come back.

What the fuck does that mean? She has all her skills and talents. Even down to being able to piss Clarke off without even being anywhere near her.

From the flickering buoy and their positions and patterns of red and green lights she calculates they have another 2 hours or so before they dock. She checks her watch, pulls down her hat just over her eyes and wraps her arms around herself. The alcove they've been sitting in cuts the wind and she thinks about the countless amounts of shit she needs to take care of instead of being on this ferry and heading towards this island and a past she doesn't want to face.

Most of the time ciphering of any kind puts her into a sweet little fugue state that calms her. It gives her a silence she can use, a clean slate. Numbers and patterns, holistic systems' thinking doesn't lie, not like she does. Her stress level rises so she let's her mind roam free, she lets thoughts and images surface and come clean. There's no mental discipline when she's in this state. She concentrates on everything and nothing. Specifics come to her, certain repressed conduits begin to function. She adjusts her body into the corner of the bench, trying to restore some control to the hurt and chaos Clarke provokes in her. She wants to rebel against the obvious love she feels for her. She massages her leg, gently rubbing the bruised muscle; the pain is still there.

She starts to get up but she can't. She can barely move.

The pain spreads through her body, so violent she doubles over, flailing her hands out, shaking her head to clear it, her eyes go unfocused. She whips her head up, grimaces with pain, and looks over at Clarke. She's come back and looks at her, concerned and stunned. "Raven?"

"Clarke?" She moans, "It's my head." The pain tears through her right temple, blinding her for a few seconds. She claws at her head before Clarke can get to her and she must pass out for a few seconds, she loses consciousness and comes to just as quickly and then she's wrapped up in someone's arms, she can't focus or remember anything. She forgets her name.

* * *

><p>"Raven?" Clarke's voice is soft in her ear.<p>

They've collapsed together against the railing and the sleet pelting her face brings her back to herself. The smell of the ocean and the coming winter, the salt laden wind and vast miles of open water, the coastline all coalesces into one feeling. Clarke is stroking her

face, palpating her temples and the surrounding areas.

"Ow, babe. Hurts."

"I know," Clarke says, and traces a finger up through her hair, she takes out the band holding it back while parting it and running her fingers through the soft, damp dark waves. "Okay?"

"Better."

Clarke shifts her in her arms and brings her head down against her neck, "What happened? There's a scar. We'll have Mom look at it but it looks bad," She murmurs, "It looks really bad."

"The accident. I was high off my ass and smashed through the front window of an SUV. That's how I ended up in rehab."

"Let's get you back to the car, okay?"

Raven nods and sits up, disengages gently from Clarke's protective embrace, and tries unsuccessfully to stand up. Clarke supports her around her waist and drapes her arm around her shoulders muttering about stupid obstinateâ€

"I can hear you."

* * *

><p>The drive from the ferry is smooth enough given the weather. They arrive at the house way after midnight. Abby stands wrapped in an old indian blanket under the porch light. The snow is falling at a steady rate. Her expression is remote and unreadable as Clarke comes around to Raven's side of the car and helps her down. Raven leans heavily on Clarke and they approach her slowly. Clarke's being very careful with her, at least physically, more careful than Raven could hope for after the debacle of this whole entire fucking day.<p>

Raven almost cries then, too, because Abby finally focuses, looks right at her and smilesâ€and it somehow makes the last few years all worth it. Raven knows that's crazy as hell, but she also knows there's only one person who wouldn't judge her, and so all Raven can do is lean against Clarke and wait for her vision to clear, hoping that Abby willâ€

Abby steps down from the porch and takes both of them in her arms.

"Welcome home, Raven."

End
file.